

Costly Discrimination and Ethnic Conflict: The Case of the Liberian Civil Wars^{*}

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Abstract: Given the moral condemnation of ethnic conflict combined with the absence and/or ineffectiveness of international policies to intervene, understanding the conditions under which ethnic conflict can resolve itself without elimination or subjugation of an ethnic group or groups is important. The Liberian civil war of 1989 to 1990 was characterized by brutal, ethnic conflict. However, the subsequent civil wars of 1992 to 1993 and 1994 to 1996 were defined by factional affiliation that was increasingly independent of ethnic identity. Using these wars as a case study, this paper argues that ethnic discrimination by the warring factions became too costly in that it sacrificed available out-group labor in both conflictive and productive activities. The paper also argues that, despite discrimination being net unprofitable, its abandonment came at a cost. Specifically, out-group labor was anticomplementary to in-group labor in conflictive activities. In general, while political entrepreneurs may initially discriminate along ethnic lines to raise the marginal product of in-group labor, the benefits of subsequently abandoning discrimination (the positive marginal product of out-group labor) may be offset by decreasing marginal product of in-group labor.

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I. Introduction

While unsavory, fomenting hatred and channeling it into violent conflict can be a means for political entrepreneurs to obtain their ends. In many examples, the ethnic conflict can become violent. In extreme examples, it can approach genocidal. Many would point to the mass murders, assaults, and rapes in the Darfur region, western Sudan, as a recent and ongoing example. Furthermore, modern history is replete with similar examples including the actions of the Nazis, the Khmer Rouge, and the Ottoman Empire during WWI. An obvious question of importance is: Once violent ethnic conflict begins, what can and/or should be done to stop it?

Given that the international community has historically demonstrated an unwillingness to intervene in ethnic conflicts (Powers, 2003), related and also important question is: Under what conditions will ethnic conflicts resolve endogenously? Further, under what conditions will an endogenous resolution not involve the subjugation or extermination of the weaker ethnic group(s)? If we phrase the question in terms of the rational political entrepreneurs who instigate conflict: Under what conditions does violent ethnic conflict become unprofitable?

This paper aims to address the question above using the Liberian civil wars of 1989 through 1996 as a motivating case study. Liberia represents a case where brutally-violent ethnic conflict characterized the onset of the wars. During the first war (1989-1990), the violence committed by Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) against the Gio and Mano ethnic groups and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) against the Mandingo and Krahn ethnic groups was exceedingly vicious, evoking

claims of genocide from some in the international community. However, while the NPFL would survive the successive wars of 1992-1993 and 1994-1996 with Taylor popularly – and overwhelmingly – elected as president in 1997, by the beginning of the later war factional affiliation became more important than ethnicity in defining friend and foe (Outram (1997, p. 361) and Ellis (1995, p. 183)). By the time relative peace and stability was restored, the ethnic element to the conflict had largely disappeared.

Charles Taylor would remain in power until August of 2003. His rule was not notable in terms of overt ethnic favoritism and/or violent conflict. Apparently circumstances made profitable, for Taylor, a permanent abandonment of ethnicity as a margin along which to gain/maintain power. Taylor's regime was by no means a city-upon-the-hill – (Taylor is presently on trial for human rights violations in The Hague) – but the abandonment of the ethnic dimension is still remarkable (and positive to the limited extent that ethnic conflict is ethically discounted relative to non-ethnic conflict).

Glaeser (2005, p. 80) observes that, "The history of hatred suggests that when people are willing to listen, political entrepreneurs can create hatred" and "[b]y telling tales of past and future crimes, people can become convinced that some out-group is dangerous." The tales may or may not be true. Given that verification of such tales is costly, political entrepreneurs can exploit this fact towards their own ends. These insights are all-the-more relevant in regards to Charles Taylor, the child of an Americo-Liberian father and Gola mother, who was clearly motivated solely by aspirations to power (Gershoni, 1997, pp. 60-62). Why was ethnicity initially a profitable margin for Taylor to exploit and then subsequently unprofitable?

This paper proposes an answer to the above question and is organized as follows. Section II overviews the Liberian civil wars, accentuating facts that I believe are important to account for the abandonment of the ethnic dimension of the conflict. Specifically: (i) at the onset of war, the ethnic groups represented by both the ruling regime and the NPFL constituted a minority of the total Liberian population; (ii) the remainder of the total population, along with the abundant natural resources of Liberia, were important and complementary disputable resources for Taylor and other warlords; and (iii) given casualties and the displacement of Liberians, ethnic discrimination became too costly. Ethnic discrimination was costly enough that (iv) it offset costs associated with anticomplementarity between in-group and out-group ethnic soldiers. Section III then concludes with some discussion and by relating the insights gleaned to the existing economic literature on ethnic conflict.

II. The Liberian Civil Wars: 1989-1996

A. Foundations of Ethnic Conflict: Samuel Doe Regime, 1980-1989

In April of 1980, Master-Sergeant Samuel Doe entered the Executive Mansion in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, with a small group of armed officers from the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) and overthrew the regime of William Tolbert in dramatic fashion, butchering Tolbert in his own bed. The group of soldiers declared themselves the

People's Redemption Council (PRC) and Samuel Doe declared himself chairman and head of state.¹

Doe's PRC heavily recruited his government and military from his own ethnic group, the Krahn, representing only 5 percent of Liberians (Harris, 1999, p. 433). The PRC also fostered a large patronage network tied to Mandingo commercial interests (Harris (1999, p. 433) and Konneh (1996, pp. 151-153). The Mandingo people are a Muslim group with extensive trade networks. They began to settle in Liberian territory in the early 19th century from Guinea but are still widely-viewed as foreigners (Harris, 1999) are one of the smallest of Liberia's ethnic groups.

Doe held elections in October of 1985 as an attempt to lend legitimacy to his military rule under a new constitution. Despite limiting the media coverage of some and the outright banning of other political parties other than Doe's own National Democratic Party of Liberia (NDPL), along with the confiscation of ballot boxes and subsequent opaque counting processes, Doe was elected president by an official margin of 50.9 percent of the vote (Liebenow, 1987, pp. 280-296). The generally-acknowledged true winner of the election was Jackson F. Doe (an ethnic Gio of no relation to Samuel) (Harris (1999, p. 433), Ellis (2007, p. 59), & Pham (2004, p. 84)).

During the drafting of the constitution and the lead-up to elections, the increasingly solidified ethnic-bases of Doe's regime alienated elements of the PRC and AFL. Their allegiance was predicated on the PRC's initial lip service to overthrowing the oppressive, Americo-Liberian-based TWP of Tolbert. Americo-Liberians are the

¹ For good sources of general facts during the Doe regime and the subsequent civil wars see Pham (2004, chs. 3-4) and Ellis (2007, chs. 1-2).

descendants of relocated African-Americans who established the country in 1847.² From 1878 until Tolbert's fall, the TWP entrenched political and economic power in Americo-Liberian hands. The commanding general of the AFL, Thomas Quiwonkpa, member of the Gio ethnic group, was informed by Doe of his intent to demote or retire him (Ellis ((2007, p. 57) & Pham (2004, p. 85)).³

Quiwonkpa recognized the writing on the wall and fled into exile in 1983. Several other individuals fled around the same time including Prince Johnson (a Gio) and Charles Taylor. Supporters of Quiwonkpa subsequently launched raids on government offices in Nimba County (Ellis (2007, p. 58) and Pham (2004, p. 84)).⁴ (See **Figure 1**.) Fearing the someday-threat from the exiles – in particular, the popularity of Quiwonkpa – Doe ordered the AFL into Nimba County, populated predominantly by Gios and individuals of the Mano ethnic group. Krahn-dominated AFL units looted and burned villages to the ground, killing indiscriminately along the way.

Following the October 1985 election, in November Quiwonkpa reentered Liberia via Sierra Leone and attempted a military coup in Monrovia. The coup failed and sparked a vicious response by Doe's AFL including "parad[ing] Quiwonkpa's mutilated corpse around the city [with] some of Doe's troops hacking off bits to keep as souvenirs and even eating pieces of the body":

Doe proceeded to take revenge on people accused of supporting the Quiwonkpa coup and anybody considered to have celebrated [his] short-lived success during the hours when he appeared to have

² The US government and the American Colonization Society established the colony of Liberia in 1822.

³ As commander of the military, following the PRC coup Quiwonkpa was initially viewed by many international observers as the true strongman (Ellis, 2007, p. 55).

⁴ It is unclear whether or not Quiwonkpa himself was involved in these raids.

succeeded in taking power [including] a purge of Nimba county which [. . .] resulted in an official figure of 600 dead and a probable number of closer to 1,500 people killed (Ellis, 2007, p. 60).

Subsequently, "Gio and Mano were purged from the armed forces and became subject to discrimination in employment, to extortion, to looting and killing by agent's of Doe's regime" (Outram, 1997, p. 360). To add insult (from the Gio/Mano perspective) to injury, Doe explicitly recognized the oft-marginalized Mandingos as an official ethnic group of Liberia and increasingly installed them in high-profile government positions (Ellis (2007, p. 61) & Konneh (1996, p. 152)).

The lines of ethnicity were drawn – the Krahn and Mandingo serving as Doe's in-groups; Mano and Gio the persecuted out-groups. The larger of the two in-groups (the Krahn) may have represented 5 percent of the population by the end of the Doe regime in 1989. The Gio and the Mano were probably 8 to 9 percent of the population each (Outram, 1997, p. 358). All together the four groups were at best a quarter of the total Liberian population. In any case, the ethnic conflict would become two-sided when, on Christmas Eve 1989, a relatively small, lightly-armed group of men crossed into Nimba County from Côte d'Ivoire.

B. Ethnic Conflict: Charles Taylor's NPFL and the First Civil War, 1989-1990

The participants in the failed 1985 coup, led by Thomas Quiwonkpa, labeled themselves the National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). Quiwonkpa's ethnic background and home county of Nimba, combined with the brutal raids on Nimba County by the AFL,

left the former commanding general with the image of a martyr for the Gio and Mano peoples. It is no surprise, then, that Charles Taylor named his band of Libyan-trained, Liberian exiles the NPFL.⁵ The move would prove exceedingly effective in gaining popular support and facilitating recruitment.

The NPFL, consisting of between 90 and 168 men including Prince Johnson, crossed into Nimba County (Ellis (2007, p. 75) & Pham (2004, p. 97)). The first people targeted by the NPFL were government officials and soldiers, as well as some Mandingo individuals who were accused of being informants to the Doe regime (Outram, 1997, p. 360). Taylor, on New Years Eve, was broadcast on BBC radio claiming the NPFL's responsibility for the insurgency and stating that NPFL forces had entered Monrovia (Ellis, 2007, p. 75). Doe responded with typical brutality: "This was the start of a steady-stream of murders marked by the appearance of headless corpses in the morning" (Ellis, 2007, p. 76). More systematically, the AFL, "in the next two months rounded up hundreds of Gio and Mano civilians in Monrovia, suspecting them by reason of ethnic origin alone of being potential [NPFL] collaborators" (Ellis, 2007, p. 76). Doe's scorched-earth tactics resulted in over 300,000 refugees (Adeleke, 1995, p. 575).

Doe was unwittingly playing to the advantage of Taylor and his initially small band of soldiers. Having wrapped himself in Quiwonkas' NPFL mantle and attacked the oppressive regime, "Taylor won support from the disaffected Mano and Gio ethnic groups, we were discriminated against under the Doe regime" (Gershoni, 1997, pp. 68-69).

⁵ For an overview of the Taylor NPFL background pre-Nimba-County invasion and its relationship to Quiwonkpa see Ellis (2007, pp. 65-74).

Gio citizens of Nimba in particular were joining the NPFL in large numbers and attacking Krahn, whom they regarded, no matter how unjustly, collectively responsible for the brutality of Doe, and Mandingo, who made themselves unpopular by profiting from Doe's rule and by acquiring land in Nimba, where they were not considered to have hereditary rights (Ellis, 2007, p. 78).

After the initial invasion of Nimba County, Taylor's forces swelled to 10,000 strong by the time he reached Monrovia (Gershoni, 1997, p. 69).

Atrocities on the part of both the NPFL and the AFL became commonplace during 1990. In July, the NPFL moved into Lofa County and reportedly slaughtered 500 Mandingos (Ellis, 2007, p. 79). For its part, the AFL entered St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia in late July and killed 600 displaced citizens of war of mainly Gio and Mano ethnicity (Pham, 2004, p. 101). The NPFL was noted for testing people for the ability to speak Gio or Mano dialects; failure resulted in death on the spot (Outram, 1997, p. 360). A Gio refugee claimed that AFL soldiers "said that they were sorry that they hadn't killed all the Gio people in 1985, and they were just waiting for the order" (Outram, 1997, p. 360). Additional details were documented by Human Rights Watch (1990) in a report calling Liberia a "human rights disaster".

As of summer 1990, Taylor controlled 90 percent of Liberia – nearly everywhere except the capital, Monrovia. Primarily Anglophone members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sponsored a force to sustain the Doe regime, or at least stabilize the capital and arrange for a cease fire. While claiming to be non-partisan, an underlying motive was apparently to offset the support of Francophone

Côte d'Ivoire and Burkino Faso for the NPFL. The ECOWAS ceasefire monitoring group (ECOWAS) entered Liberia via Sierra Leone with 2,700 men in mid-August 1990. Nigeria represented the primary contributor (70 percent of men and supplies) to the force; Ghana, Sierra Leone, and Gambia also contributed, along with Francophile Guinea (Howe, 1996-1997).

The AFL, facing dwindling prospects for victory, quickly agreed to cooperate with ECOMOG, as did a splinter faction from the NPFL: the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL) lead by Prince Johnson and consisting mainly of Gio special forces that had attacked Monrovia under his control (Pham, 2004, p. 102). While ECOMOG faced off against the NPFL, the INPFL was allowed remain in the areas of Monrovia already under their control (encompassing ECOMOG headquarters) *and* to remain armed. In an inexplicable, unarmed trip to ECOMOG headquarters on September 9, Samuel Doe and entourage of 75 were attacked by armed INPFL soldiers. Doe's bodyguards were gunned down, and Doe himself was kidnapped and then videotaped while being tortured and killed in the presence of Prince Johnson (Howe (1996-1997, p. 154) & Pham (2004, pp. 104-108).⁶ In November, Taylor agreed to a ceasefire and an Interim Government of National Unity (IGNU) was installed in Monrovia with Amos Sawyer, a Liberian scholar who had been commandeered by Doe earlier to draft his constitution, sworn in as president.

C. *The Subsequent Civil Wars: 1991-1996*

⁶ Johnson, on tape, ordered Does left ear cut of and presented to him, at which point he ate part and discarded the rest; this was followed by Johnson's call for the other ear (Pham, 2004, pp. 107-108).

As of August of 1990, over 5,000 had died in the war (Pham, 2004, p. 102); as of October of 1990, over 500,000 had fled the country (Human Rights Watch, 1990, p. 2).⁷

(Liberia's total population was around 2.5 million (Gershoni, 1997, p. 55).) The Krahn-dominated AFL, after the murder of Doe, was faced with the fact that "roughly two thirds of Liberia's 125,000 Krahn [had] fled the country and the remainder [were] at risk of genocide" (Human Rights Watch, 1990, p. 2).

Despite the installation of the IGNU, Taylor and his NPFL still controlled at least 90 percent of Liberia.⁸ In July he had established the National Patriotic Reconstruction Assembly Government (NPRAG) with himself as president. He proclaimed his territories "Greater Liberia"; its capital was seated in Gbarnga in Bong County. The NPRAG established a banking system (the Bong Bank) with its own currency, maintained an official newspaper called *The Patriot*, and operated television and radio networks. It also operated airfields and a deepwater port at the coastal town of Buchanan (Pham, 2004, p. 104).

Controlling most of Liberia's resource-rich territory, Taylor was able to fund his NPRAG and NPFL forces to great extent by taxation and/or protection payments. European and US businesses operated in Greater Liberia extracting iron ore, rubber, timber, diamonds, and gold. Lowenkopf (1995, p. 94) claims that this resulted in \$8 to \$9 million in monthly revenues to NPRAG. Reno (1998, pp. 98-99) goes further, claiming that during the first two years of war "the total yields of Taylor's warlord economy approached \$200-\$250 million a year":

⁷ Gershoni (1997, p.55) states that 8 months into the first war, almost half of the 2.5 million Liberians were displaced and this is echoed by Human Rights Watch (1990, p. 2). Displaced persons include those having fled their homes but not the country itself.

⁸ That is about 43,000 square miles (Adeleke, 1995, p. 575).

Taylor incorporated commercial networks as a quick, cheap, and efficient means of extending his authority [. . .] He received support of existing strongmen and more marginal foreign entrepreneurs who wanted to keep a foothold in Liberia's natural resource market. Both understood that they could continue to profit while they followed Taylor's directives.

Sometimes foreign companies provided more than revenue for Taylor. Taylor and Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, which had operated since 1926 in Liberia, reached an agreement where the NPFL provided protection to Firestone and Firestone provided communication facilities (e.g., satellite linkups for cellular phones) to the NPFL (Reno, 1998, p. 100).⁹

During the subsequent two civil wars from October 1992 to July 1993 (beginning with "Operation Octopus", an assault on Monrovia by the NPFL, and ending with the Cotonou cease-fire) and from September 1994 (when anti-NPFL coalition overran Gbarnga) to April 1996 (when the "third battle of Monrovia" occurred), The NPFL found its opposition multiplying in terms of factions. In late 1991, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria supported the organization of a group of anti-Taylor (primarily Krahn and Mandingo) Liberians called the United Liberation Movement of Liberia (ULIMO). ULIMO would subsequently split in 1994 into its Mandingo (ULIMO-K) and Krahn (ULIMO-J) components, respectively.¹⁰ Also, 1991 saw the creation of the Liberian

⁹ Ross (2004) studies 13 civil wars since 1990 to examine whether natural resource endowments contributed to their onset, duration, and/or intensity. He finds that natural resources contributed to the duration of the civil wars: "One important reason for the failures of [accords and cease-fires in Liberia] was that the warring parties [. . .] feared that they would lose access to Liberia's resources wealth" (p. 53).

¹⁰ The "K" and "J" are not based on ethnicity but rather on the respective leaders' last names: Alhaji Kromah and Roosevelt Johnson.

United Defense Front (LUDF) made up greatly of Krahn and Mandingo. In 1993 the predominantly Krahn Liberian Peace Council (LPC) came into existence.¹¹ Then in 1994, in Lofa County, a force called the Lofa Defense Force (LDF) arose to battle ULIMO-K elements locally.¹² (Taylor subsequently funded the LDF.) Furthermore, in Monrovia the AFL remnants reorganized somewhat to constitute a fighting force.

Even by 1992, as many of 700,000 of the 2.5 million Liberians were refugees in other West African states (Lowenkopf, 1995, p. 94). By 1995 that number would rise to an estimated 727,000 (United Nations, 1995). NPFL soldiers represented a small fraction of the population but had grown to about 25,000 by 1995 (Outram, 1997, Table 1).

While the NPFL controlled Greater Liberia, covering territories representing all ethnic groups, its opposition became increasingly factionalized, localized, and composed along ethnic lines. **Table 1** presents 1995-1996 information on faction combatants from Table 1 in Outram (1997).

The situation that Taylor's NPFL faced as the 1992 to 1996 civil wars continued are summarized by the bullets below:

- control over abundant natural resources;
- control over populations of multiethnic composition that represented labor complementary to natural resources in production;
- an increasingly factionalized opposition;
- an ethnic composition that, similar to the opposition, accounted for a small percentage of the (shrinking) Liberian population.

¹¹ Ellis (2007, p. 102) is the lone source I found identifying the LPC not as Krahn predominantly, but rather Sapo).

¹² Lofa County, in the far north of Liberia, is not predominantly Mano, Gio, Krahn, or Mandingo (Outram, 1997, p. 357).

The primary thesis of this paper is that the above conditions made discrimination along ethnic lines unprofitable for the NPFL. By the time Taylor was elected to the Liberian presidency in 1997, the conflict had largely lost its ethnic dimension.

D. Factions Rather Than Ethnicities

Outram (1997, p. 361) makes the claim that, "from the 'Third War' [1994-1996] ethnic identity gave way to factional affiliation as the primary cleavage in the Liberian conflicts":

[W]hatever the precise arithmetic, the orders of magnitude involved make it clear that a warring faction that limited its recruitment to members of a single ethnic would be inviting defeat at the hands of any less discriminating faction.

By 1994, "[v]ictims of militia violence from various parts of Liberia [. . .] reported that war-bands in fact were generally composed of people speaking various Liberian languages" (Ellis, 1995, p. 183).¹³ As far as NPFL treatment of non-combatants, "Taylor largely allowed people to go about their normal business, taking a tax on external trade [. . .] and demanding levies of young men for his army" (Ellis, 1995, p. 186). Given the geographic extent of Greater Liberia, this implies that Taylor was tolerant different ethnic groups and increased the ethnic dimensions of the NPFL forces.

This strategy was initially in contrast to that of many of the other factions, e.g., the split of ULIMO along Krahn and Mandingo lines into ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K.

¹³ Ellis (2007, p. 116) states that as early as July 1990, the NPFL "had attracted new recruits from every area and every ethnic group."

However, those factions paid in terms of their discrimination and evidence suggests that they (belatedly) abandoned it at least partly. For example, in 1994 Tom Woewiyu of the NPFL broke off into an anti-Taylor movement (NPFL-CRC).¹⁴ The LPC, ULIMO-J, and AFL (all ostensibly Krahn) was soon aligned with the NPFL-CRC (ostensibly Mano and Gio and/or multiethnic) (Outram, 1997, p. 361).¹⁵

In terms of both funding (exploitation of natural resources in production) and in warring, the NPFL recognized that continued discrimination along, and definition of the conflict in terms of, ethnic lines was unprofitable. Other factions apparently followed suit, though destined ultimately for defeat. ECOMOG eventually brought Taylor to the table, along with the other factions, to sign two accords in Abuja, Nigeria, in August 1995 and then April 1996.¹⁶ Elections were set for May of 1997, allocating legislative seats and choosing a president using country-wide proportional representation. Given the 8 to 9 percent of the population that the Gio and Mano each constituted, Taylor's popular election 75 percent of the vote is notable. Infamously, Taylor ran on the slogan: "He killed my ma, he killed my pa, but I will vote for him." This clearly suggests a war-weary plea for any stability rather than an appeal to the virtues of Taylor's platform. However, the fact that Liberians viewed a Taylor regime as tolerable speaks to a general belief that it would not be accompanied by violent ethnic conflict.

¹⁴ CRC stands for Central Revolutionary Council.

¹⁵ I was unable to identify the ethnicity of Woewiyu himself, though one would have to assume it is likely to be Gio or Mano (or unlikely to be Krahn). Woewiyu would survive the wars and run for president in 2005 in the first elections post-Taylor. He would lose to Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf who is currently the popularly-elected Liberian president. (Johnson-Sirleaf was also a presidential candidate in the 1985 election against Doe, as well as the 1997 election against Taylor.)

¹⁶ Nigeria's new leader, Sani Abacha, seems to have recognition that working closely with Taylor was the only way to quickly and effectively bring the costly ECOMOG intervention to an end (Harris, 1999, p. 436).

E. *In-Group and Out-Group Members as Anticomplements in Conflictive Activities*

Though discrimination became too costly to be profitable in the Liberian civil wars, there is evidence that abandoning discrimination along ethnic lines may have come at its own cost. Specifically, the recruitment of out-group members is beneficial in that their marginal product in making war is positive. However, the exploitation of out-group members in conflictive activities can potentially lower the marginal product of in-group members. In-group and out-group labor can be *anticomplementary* inputs to conflictive activities.

As Glaeser (2005, p. 80) observes: "The history of hatred suggests that when people are willing to listen, political entrepreneurs can create hatred" and "[b]y telling tales of past and future crimes, people can become convinced that some out-group is dangerous." When a political entrepreneur discriminates along ethnic lines, this can motivate in-group members, increasing their effectiveness (i.e., their marginal product). The cost to recruiting out-group members is that it belies the hate-creating propaganda and undefines the in-group members' objectives. This insight is essentially that of Becker (1957, p. 31) in his pioneering work concerning discrimination by employees:

An employer discriminates by refusing to hire someone with a marginal value product greater than his marginal cost; he does not discriminate by refusing to hire someone with a marginal value product less than marginal cost, *as might occur in cases of discrimination by employees [. . .] against this person [my emphasis]*.

Setting aside the semantic issue that Becker reserves the term *discrimination* for irrational behavior, his insight is that discrimination can be rational if in-group employees react negatively to out-group employees.

The brutality – or *enthusiasm* – of participants in the ethnic-based 1989 to 1990 war is documented above. An administrator at Cuttington University College recalled his conversations with NPFL soldiers occupying the campus in May 1990; most of the non-professional (i.e., post-invasion recruits) stated that they were fighting to avenge their dead relatives (Ellis, 2007, p. 113). Ellis (2007, p. 113) also remarks that, "[f]rom the outset there was no doubt that the NPFL was intent on pursuing anyone seen as a collaborator with Doe and his henchmen, including all Krahn and Mandingo, considered to be collaborators *en masse*."

However, by the third war the enthusiasm of many fighters had dwindled. Their goals were no longer clear to them. Ellis (2007, p. 127) notes: "When asked why they were killing their own people, [soldiers] would often mumble something about being 'freedom fighters', but could not explain any further." And Outram (1997, p. 366) notes: "Since the end of the First War none of the factions has been in a position to appeal to strongly held ideological convictions."

III. Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Caselli and Coleman (2006) present a model of ethnic conflict where a strong group's members collectively decide whether or not to seize power from a weak group. Seizing power (which amounts to appropriating the society's resources for the strong group) is

costly. Also, weak group members, at positive cost, can “switch” groups after the fact if the strong group initiates conflict. (For example, an individual can change their ethnically distinct name, adopt the religion and cultural attributes of the strong group, etc.) The model highlights the importance of ethnic “distance” between potential contenders and predicts that, “we should observe more conflict over resources in ethnically heterogeneous societies” (Caselli and Coleman, 2006, p. 1).

The Caselli and Coleman model is not well-suited to account for resolutions to ethnic conflicts. Ethnic differences are not likely to narrow considerably during relatively short time spans. However, it is interesting to note its relevance to the language test described in section 2.B above in a country where physical appearance is a weak signal of ethnicity.

Glaeser (2005) develops a model where politicians decide whether to vie for votes by fostering hatred in an in-group for an out-group and running on an appropriative platform. The model highlights the costly verification that in-group members must decide whether to undertake in regards to politicians’ claims. The relevance of the Glaeser model to the Liberian case is questionable because it ultimately focuses on politicians’ decisions to *lie* about an out-group betting that in-group members will not check the facts. However, in the Liberian case, Doe *did* favor Krahn and Mandingos and his AFL *did* commit atrocities against the Gio and Mano peoples.

Hirshleifer (1988 & 1991) and Maxwell and Reuveny (2005) may represent a more fruitful approach to analyzing the Liberian conflict. They focus on two parties playing a game where there is a disputable resource (e.g., oil) and both parties allocate an

undisputable resource (e.g., labor) between productive activities with the complementary disputable resource or appropriative (conflictive) activities against the other party.

These authors' framework could be usefully extended to account for a situation like in Liberia if it was extended to (a) include disputed resources that can be used not only in productive but also in conflictive activities (e.g., out group labor) and (b) are anticomplementary to undisputed resources in those conflictive activities. Below I sketch the details of the extended framework I have in mind (though a solution to the resulting model has remained elusive thus far).

Consider to political entrepreneurs, 1 and 2, who each represent their own in-group (IG) populations, R_1 and R_2 . IG populations can be allocated across productive activities (E_1 and E_2) and conflictive activities (F_1 and F_2):

$$(1) \quad R_i = E_i + F_i \quad i = 1,2.$$

There are also out-group (OG) populations totaling S . OG members can be recruited by political entrepreneurs as soldiers,

$$(2) \quad S_1 + S_2 \leq S,$$

and the remainder, S_e , is used in productive activities,

$$(2)' \quad S_1 + S_2 + S_e = S.$$

OG members are productive fighters but their recruitment discourages IG soldiers, so that a political entrepreneur's conflictive services are,

$$(3) \quad W_i = aF_i + bS_i - cF_iS_i \quad i = 1,2.$$

A political entrepreneur's productive efforts yield output,

$$(4) \quad H_i = \beta S_e E_i \quad i = 1,2.$$

And total productive output ($H = H_1 + H_2$) is up for grabs in conflict so that a political entrepreneurs income is,

$$(5) \quad Y_i = P_i H \quad i = 1, 2,$$

where,

$$(6) \quad P_i = \frac{\psi_i W_i}{\psi_i W_i + \psi_j W_j} \quad i, j = 1, 2; i \neq j.$$

The ψ 's represent the IG's relative efficiencies in conflict and the above expression is between 0 and 1 and sums to unity across i and j . The portion of OG individuals recruited by a political entrepreneur is,

$$(7) \quad \gamma_i = \alpha_i \left(\frac{C_i}{C_i + C_j} \right)^{\frac{1}{C_i}} \quad i, j = 1, 2; i \neq j,$$

where the α 's represent relative efficiencies at recruitment and the above expression is between 0 and 1 and sums to less than or equal to unity across i and j . OG individuals recruited by a political entrepreneur are therefore,

$$(8) \quad S_i = \gamma_i S.$$

Each political entrepreneur maximizes,

$$(9) \quad \max_{F, C} P_i(F_i, F_j) [H_i(C_i, C_j, R_i - F_i) + H_j(C_j, C_i, R_j - F_j)] - C_i.$$

Entrepreneurs choose F and C simultaneously, hold Nash conjectures about each other's F and C , and S and R 's are common knowledge.

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TABLE 1
COMBATANT NUMBERS OF LIBERIAN FACTIONS, 1995-1996

Faction	Territory	Combatants
AFL	barracks within ECOMOG zone in Monrovia	8,734
LDF	Lofa County	750
LPC	Eastern Counties	4,650
NPFL	Nimba and Cong Counties; adjacent areas	25,000
ULIMO-J	southwest	7,776
ULIMO-K	northwest	12,460
ECOMOG	Monrovia; surrounding areas	7,269
Non-NPFL factions		34,370
Non-NPFL factions and ECOMOG		41,639

Source: Outram (1997, Table 1).



FIG. 1.—Map of Liberia.